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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

God, our guide, we know not what a day may bring. We are grateful for the knowledge that You guide our steps and direct our paths.

As our lawmakers face the challenges of their work, give them the wisdom to know and do Your will. Open their minds and hearts to the movement of Your providence, providing them grace for every exigency, disappointment or fulfillment, sorrow or joy. Lord, guide our lawmakers that they may be just in purpose, wise in counsel, and unwavering in duty. May they uphold the honor of our Nation and secure the protection of our people.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. COTTON). The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURE PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—H.R. 3231

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there is a bill at the desk due a second reading.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will read the bill by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 3231), to amend title 5, United States Code, to protect unpaid interns in the Federal Government from workplace harassment and discrimination, and for other purposes.

Mr. MCCONNELL. In order to place the bill on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bill will be placed on the calendar.

WRDA

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, last night I took action to move to the 2016 Water Resources Development Act, an important authorization bill supporting our Nation's waterways. Chairman INHOFE has worked across the aisle with Ranking Member BOXER to craft this bipartisan bill, and I hope we can reach an agreement to pass it very soon.

ZIKA VIRUS, VETERANS, AND DEFENSE FUNDING

Mr. MCCONNELL. Now on another matter entirely, last night Senate Democrats blocked critical funding for veterans, for pregnant mothers and babies, and for servicemembers. It is not the first time or even the second time they have put partisan politics ahead of the health and safety of the American people; it is now the third time. Why Democrats would filibuster critical funding for Zika control at a time when cases are growing is really inexplicable. Why Democrats would filibuster critical funding for defense at a time when threats are growing is absolutely inexcusable.

In case colleagues across the aisle have missed it, here is the latest on the spread of Zika: There are now more than 2,700 cases in our country. More than 30 of those are likely local mos-

quito-borne cases. Yet, instead of acting with urgency to approve funding to combat Zika, Democrats have chosen once again to filibuster it.

In case colleagues across the aisle have missed this, too, here is the latest on the global changes facing us: North Korea continues to show signs of aggression with its recent tests of another missile. Iran continues to provoke our ships in the Persian Gulf—actions the commander of the U.S. Central Command called “very concerning.” ISIL continues to inspire and call for terror attacks around the globe, from a wedding in Turkey, to a church in France, to a nightclub in Orlando. Yet, instead of acting with urgency to approve funding to confront these threats, Senate Democrats have chosen once again to filibuster the Defense bill as well.

It really makes you scratch your head when the Democratic leader boasts how he has led such a cooperative minority. In what sense? Democrats have used the filibuster to blow up a bipartisan appropriations process for 2 years in a row now—2 years in a row. That is not my definition of a cooperative minority. They have bragged openly about their filibuster summer strategy. They have filibustered to protect executive overreach that even fellow Democrats claimed to oppose. They have even filibustered legislation designed to help victims of modern-day slavery, if you can believe that. Once again, they are filibustering to block funding for Zika control, for veterans, and for our men and women in uniform.

We hear the Democratic leader say he wants his party to do away with the filibuster altogether if Democrats win back control of the Senate. If he is so concerned about this abuse, maybe he should stop abusing it himself. Stop filibustering critical resources for Zika. Stop filibustering help for veterans. Stop filibustering the funding for our men and women in uniform because they count on us.

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2016—MOTION TO PROCEED

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the motion to proceed to S. 2848, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 523, S. 2848, a bill to provide for the conservation and development of water and related resources, to authorize the Secretary of the Army to construct various projects for improvements to rivers and harbors of the United States, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am going to—I believe I have an opportunity to speak on the floor now on the pending measure as in morning business, but I am going to yield as soon as the Democratic leader comes back, which I expect to be momentarily, and I would ask unanimous consent to then reclaim the floor. He has just arrived. I am going to yield to the Democratic leader for his leadership time.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I appreciate very much my friend the assistant leader for always looking out for me, as he has for 34 years. I appreciate it very much. We came together here 34 years ago, to Congress, and I appreciate all he has done over the years and especially his friendship.

ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING AND JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, quickly, it is hard for me to understand how my friend the Republican leader can stand here and talk about Zika. Let's just look back at what happened. We passed here, with 89 votes, a compromise Zika funding bill. Democrats and the President wanted more money. We agreed to \$1.1 billion. It flew out of here and went to the House. The House decided they wanted to do a few things. They wanted to restrict funding for birth control provided by Planned Parenthood. Remember, 2 million women visited Planned Parenthood last year. With all the problems with Zika now, there are a lot more who are going to be showing up at Planned Parenthood. That legislation exempts pesticide spraying from the Clean Water Act. It cuts veterans funding by \$500 million—half a billion dollars. That money was being used to speed up the process in the veterans' claims. It cuts Ebola funding by \$107 million. Yet it rescinds \$543 million of ObamaCare money. It strikes a prohibition on displaying the Confederate flag.

So, in effect, the Republicans in the House decided they would send back

this bill loaded with poison pills. We had just passed the bill that I told you went over there—straight funding for research and taking care of the problems with Zika. That was it. It was very simple. Even though the Republicans voted—89 votes—with us a few weeks before that, they suddenly decided: Well, we will go along with flying the Confederate flag, cutting ObamaCare, and destroying Planned Parenthood. So how can he with a straight face talk about our having hurt Zika?

Zika is a very dangerous virus. We are learning more about it every day. One of America's prominent scientists today said that now Zika affects everybody. The virus goes in people's eyes and leads to vision impairment and blindness. It is not just women of child-bearing age; it is going to affect a lot of people.

Please, please, Mr. Republican Leader, don't talk about this anymore. It takes away from your dignity.

Yesterday I objected to committees meeting to bring attention to the fact that the Senate Republicans refuse to hold a hearing on Chief Judge Merrick Garland, this man who should go to the Supreme Court. As said by a senior member of the Republican caucus, ORRIN HATCH of Utah, he was a consensus nominee, but they refuse to allow this man to go on the Supreme Court. They want to save that Supreme Court nomination for Donald Trump. Donald Trump picking who goes on the Supreme Court—a man who believes in waterboarding. He said that waterboarding isn't enough torture; we need to do more than just waterboarding. That is just one of the little snippets from this man.

This morning, a number of Senators are going to go to the Supreme Court steps with former clerks of Judge Garland, and we are going to hear positive statements about Merrick Garland, as if we need more. We have plenty. This is a good man.

I am glad to see that the Republican leader is talking about some movement on Zika. Maybe we have a path forward on that. We are going to continue to take steps to keep attention on this important nomination and on Zika and other things.

The Republicans simply aren't doing their job. You have seen these charts we have, and we will continue to show them. It is very simple: Do your job. And the Republicans simply are refusing to do their job.

In the meantime, I want to find other ways to focus attention on what they are not doing to help Chief Judge Garland. My friend the assistant Democratic leader is going to attend a meeting—which he does whenever they have one, with rare exception—of the Judiciary Committee. He loves that committee. He is the ranking member and was chair of the Constitution Subcommittee. Tomorrow, it is my understanding that we are going to try to do a markup of some district court judges.

I look forward to what is going to happen at that meeting of the Judiciary tomorrow.

OBAMACARE

In this morning's Wall Street Journal—a paper not ever confused with being liberal or pro-Obama—there is stunning news—very positive news—about the number of Americans who now have health insurance. According to the Centers for Disease Control, our Nation's uninsured rate stands at 8.5 percent. From where it was before, that is stunning. Because of ObamaCare, almost 92 percent of Americans now have health insurance—92 percent of Americans. People no longer have to worry if they have a child with diabetes or someone has been in an accident or you are a woman—you can now get insurance. Insurance companies don't control what goes on.

I remind my Republican colleagues, who love to come down here and berate ObamaCare, could ObamaCare be better? It could be a lot better if we had 5 percent help from the Republicans, 2 percent, 1 percent, but they have done nothing to help the health care delivery system in this country. In fact, they have done things to hurt it. Some 70 times they voted to defund ObamaCare and do away with it. It wasn't long ago that we talked about how many millions of people had no health insurance. That is no longer an argument. It has been 6 years and the Affordable Care Act has cut the number of uninsured Americans significantly. The Nation saw the sharpest decline in the number of uninsured people in 2014 when the ObamaCare coverage provisions kicked in. This is no coincidence. While the Republicans have been making much about the premium increases, the fact is, the vast majority of Americans are protected by ObamaCare provisions that safeguard against these huge tax rates and tax increases.

These are the facts. All across America our constituents are getting the health coverage they were promised when Congress passed the Affordable Care Act. I repeat: It could be made better if a few Republicans would break away from the Trump mentality and try to help us. It is time for Republicans to stop denying the evidence. ObamaCare has worked and it is working.

NOMINATION OF MERRICK GARLAND AND THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

Mr. President, after 7 weeks, we are finally back working. We finally returned from a historically long and unprecedented long, long, long summer vacation. About 2 months were wasted by Republicans who could have been doing their jobs. We would have been happy to join with them in getting things done on the Senate floor and in our committees. If Republicans were serious about their constitutional duties, they would have spent some time giving Chief Judge Merrick Garland the hearing he deserves. He deserves to have a hearing.